

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH BRIGADIER  
GENERAL ROBERT HOLMES, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS, U.S.  
CENTRAL COMMAND, MACDILL AIR FORCE BASE, FLORIDA (VIA  
TELECONFERENCE)

MODERATOR: JACK HOLT, CHIEF, NEW MEDIA OPERATIONS

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GEN. HOLMES: Hey, Jack, this is Bob Holmes. How are you this morning?

MR. HOLT: Very good, sir. Welcome to the Bloggers Roundtable. Appreciate you taking the time to be with us this morning.

GEN. HOLMES: No, I appreciate, one, having the time here at Central Command, but really, more importantly, I appreciate your time for gathering the forum there. We are -- as you can imagine, get kind of busy. So I like to carve out time like this because I do think it's very, very important.

MR. HOLT: Well, thank you, sir. Thank you very much.

And I'd like to introduce to the Bloggers Roundtable Brigadier General Robert Holmes. He's the deputy director of operation for U.S. Central Command at MacDill Air Force Base in Florida.

And sir, with that, the floor is yours.

GEN. HOLMES: Okay. Let me take just a few minutes. I think what I'll do first is to put it into perspective for you. We've got two deputy directors for ops here at Central Command. My partner is Brigadier General Jack Egginton. Jack really looks at force management, current operations. And on my plate are quite a few of the enabling activities with regard to security operations and detainee operations, requirements as we look out into the battlespace for things that we need to provide our warfighters, information operations and -- I'm trying to think what else is in my bag of tricks.

So there are some things that I am closer to than others when it comes to the operations that we look at in Central Command, so on some things I may just tell you that may be a little bit out of my lane and I may not be comfortable answering the question. So that will be why.

If we take a look at what we're doing, the presence of, you know, our new commander, Admiral Fallon, we've got focus areas. And I don't know if you've seen those or not, but up front may quickly just run through those and let you see what we're focused on here in terms of priorities. And these are not necessarily in ascending or descending order, and Admiral Fallon has made the point that they're all five very important.

First is to set the conditions for stability in Iraq. That is hugely on his plate and he is focused on that, understanding that it's General Petraeus's day-in and day-out job, but then as the combatant commander, everything that we can do in the region within our environment as the Department of Defense with our interagency partners is to set conditions for stability in Iraq.

And then secondly, to expand governance and security in Afghanistan, and the same things that I said for Iraq I could have said there.

And then thirdly, to degrade violent extremist networks and operations and defeating primarily al Qaeda. It becomes the main priority. So, regionally we take a look at what we've got to do to go against and defeat extreme actors that choose violent means to achieve their ends.

Fourthly, to strengthen the relationship and influence the states within our region and those organizations that contribute to regional stability and the free flow of international commerce.

And then the last thing here -- and here again, these are not in ascending or descending order -- is to posture a force within Central Command that can build and sustain joint and combined warfighting capability and readiness, that we're fully partnered with the 27 states as we can in our region. Because as the combatant command -- while we focus on those first two things I mentioned, Iraq and Afghanistan -- because they are most important in terms of success there -- as the combatant command, our focus is regional, and a lot of times I think folks forget that.

We've got a very important dynamic region that is very important to the world, and then ultimately that region provides some ungoverned space where bad actors, extreme actors want to grow and do what they can to be stabilized in the region and ultimately destabilize the international community. So you can see where all of these priorities interlock for one answer, which is for Central Command a secure, stable, partnered -- and I can't underscore that word enough, "partnered" -- region. And that partnering is with our regional state partners and then our own interagency and international partners, so just -- that is a preamble.

And then I want to do something that I often don't do as I go into sitting down with a forum is just look quite recently at some very good things that we think are happening, because we all tend to sometimes focus on the question of the day, which leads us down a -- you know, sometimes a more defensive posture or a negative posture in trying to explain ourselves in various media formats. But, you know, there are several things that are happening.

One, a Taliban commander killed in Afghanistan. You know, we've been doing -- if you'll notice over the last few months, we've taken the fight to the Taliban leadership. Just a few weeks ago, looking at the death of Mullah Dadullah Lang and -- MDL is what we call him -- and now we see as of today that the Afghan forces have killed another local Taliban commander in the southern Kandahar province. So, you know, we're targeting these guys and we're going after them, and often we lose sight of that.

Then switching to Baghdad, the Army Corps of Engineers and local contractors have teamed up in the eastern section of the Iraqi capital, known as Sadr City, to reopen, renovate a hospital. And that's huge, and we don't get that word out. So, you know, I would have to just say, hey look, folks, there are some good things happening.

Then we go to Al Anbar and the Police Academy there is officially opened with a distinguished array of guests and visitors there to watch that academy open.

So there are good things happening that we lose sight of, and particularly in Al Anbar where we've seen a turnaround with the local leadership there to want to go after the al Qaeda folks and get them out of their province. So they're taking action. It's action that they want to take. It may not be the action we take, not the one that we would pursue, but they're taking it, and that's the important point there: they're taking that action.

And then the last thing that may be on your minds is the typhoon. We're watching it. Going to see if there's -- (off mike) -- looking there, one, for anything that might impact our forces. But more importantly, if there's anything with regard to humanitarian assistance that we can do in the aftermath of that storm, that's very important, because we get focused on our lethal -- our kinetic means of power and we lose sight of that this nation's Department of Defense also does a lot of good in the world when it comes to humanitarian assistance. So that's on our scope.

I've dominated enough here, so let me turn it over to you.

MR. HOLT: All right, sir, thank you very much. Good information there.

And let's start with Andrew Lubin again.

Andrew.

Q General, good morning. Andrew Lubin from ON Point. Going back to your first focus, I appreciate that it's not in order, but it's relatively important, about security you know in the area. I see yesterday the Iraqi parliament voted -- passed a binding resolution that's going to let them probably block extension of the U.N. mandate under which we're there. What do we do about this, or can we do anything about this?

GEN. HOLMES: Well, you know, that -- as I would look at the mandate, of course, it is the overarching reason that gives us authorities. But that's a policy decision that -- you know, we would then have to look and take lead of our diplomatic -- our State Department and our diplomatic instrument of power to determine how we're going to play that.

For those of us in the Department of Defense, you know, our job, number one, remains to partner with the Iraqi security force, to coach, to mentor them, to keep moving them along to become a mature and capable security force.

So yeah, I look at what you've just said as certainly a challenge for the diplomats. For those of us in the uniform, we've got to continue to focus on what we do. And that is to provide security, and we do that through partnering with the Iraqi security forces --

Q This yanks the magic carpet right out from under us and under the -- our IA and IP partners.

GEN. HOLMES: Well, again, like I say, it certainly would present a challenge. But I would have to defer -- you know, I have to stay in my lane as a military guy. And I've got to defer that to the folks in the three-piece suits that do the policy.

Q Thank you.

GEN. HOLMES: Hey, it's a great question, and I'm not trying to sidestep it. It's just that it's very important for me to stay in my lane. And right now, that's -- as a, you know, executor of military instruments of activity and power, and not the policy piece.

Q Okay.

MR. HOLT: Okay, David Axe.

Q Sir, this is David Axe with Danger Room and Aviation Week and others.

You said you have some oversight of information operations in CENTCOM, right?

GEN. HOLMES: That's correct, yeah.

Q Maybe I'm misunderstanding. But does that mean that you can comment on sort of the IO aspect of operations in Iraq?

GEN. HOLMES: Absolutely.

Q Okay, great. Well, is there like an IO surge, then, to sort of accompany the new tact we're taking in Iraq?

GEN. HOLMES: Well, I think all along your information operators, if you will -- and we have to draw a line there, and I think you can particularly understand -- the military, what we would look at as operational capabilities for information operations include certain things like, you know, psychological operations and then some other things with regard to I think Internet ops and things like that, which some of those I can't get into, one, because they part of ongoing operations, and just for the operational security involved, I can't go into it.

But I can tell you the focus is to use the information battlespace against our adversary. They use it; they use it quite well. They're very agile and adept at using it. In some cases they can use it to -- they're not bound to the things -- the policies and the values that we hold with regard to truthful information. So we go into that battlespace, if you will, if you don't mind me calling it that, fully knowing that this is an enemy that is extreme, it is violent, and it's going to use information to serve its purpose. On our hand,

we look at how we counter that violent information or that propaganda with truthful information.

Now, having said that, I definitely understand the lines drawn between military psychological operations and, you know, we are -- have policy and doctrine that allows us to do that, to tell "good news" stories, if you will, in the country where we have combat operations going on. And I also understand the line then drawn between our public affairs folks which, you know, are there for a certain reason.

Now, have we stepped up IO? We have quite a robust process in place to look at the information in media space; we look at cyberspace and see what we can do to engage our adversary there. MNF-I -- and I'm sure you're familiar with, you know, their strategic effects cell under the past leadership of General Bill Caldwell, and now Admiral Fox has stepped up into that role, and they're very, very prolific, very active, very agile right there in Iraq.

We're looking now at what we do to counter the Taliban as we see them in Afghanistan, particularly right now with their propaganda campaign about the collateral damage. And then we're looking all across the region so that we communicate effectively, at least from our role as the combatant commander, those priorities that the commander has laid out for us.

Now, we cannot do that in isolation from what our national policies are, what our national priorities are with regard to security and stability and setting conditions for peace. So we're interlocking, if you will, with the State Department's Office for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication under Ambassador Hughes. And we're setting the conduits up from our components and then here at Central Command, as the combatant command, with the Department of Defense in joint staff activities and then interlocking right into Ms. Hughes' office.

That may have been a long answer, but it's sort of a -- I felt like I needed to share all of that with you, so that you'd see that it's not just a huge hoopla in public -- in PR, but it's a well- focused effort to counter the enemy's use of information and that part of -- in our present asymmetric war. And information is a huge part of that.

Q Great. Thanks.

MR. HOLT: Okay. And let's see. Mark Finkelstein. Mark?

Q Yes. Good morning, General Holmes. You described in sartorial terms the differences between the different actors here in our different roles, so that there are the military people in uniform, the diplomats in their three-piece suits, and then there are of course the bloggers, like us, also known as the Pajamahadeen, sitting around in our T-shirts and shorts, if that. So --

GEN. HOLMES: A very important -- a very, very important --

Q (Chuckles.) So we also have our role.

GEN. HOLMES: (Off mike) -- not -- (off mike) -- three-piece suits in a derogatory --

Q Not at all.

In any case, there had been a certain kind of conventional wisdom that had been painted in the media a few months about a nascent Taliban in Afghanistan, and there was talk of an anticipated, quote- unquote, "spring offensive" by the Taliban.

You have made reference to some of our military successes in Afghanistan, but -- I have two questions. One, specifically, to what extent did we really see a spring offensive by the Taliban materialize? And two, there has been some political debate here at home about where the center of gravity is in the war against al Qaeda, with, you know, the administration saying that Iraq is in many ways the centerpiece and others suggesting that in fact we should be focusing more attention on Afghanistan, that that's really the center of action against al Qaeda. Could you please comment on those two items?

GEN. HOLMES: Yeah. Let me -- and I may get you to restate the second question if I get lost in answering the first. So let me go -- and I think you said was -- did we see a spring offensive and --

Q And where is the center of gravity in the war against al Qaeda, Afghanistan or Iraq?

GEN. HOLMES: Okay. You know, we talked about a spring offensive, and I think, very aptly, General McNeill's comment was, we will generate the spring offensive. And I think that's what we've seen in Afghanistan, is that we have been very proactive -- "we" being not only the U.S. forces there but now, more importantly, the ISAF force, the NATO forces there -- in being very proactive, particularly as we look at Sangin Valley and the activity that we've seen there.

So, was there a Taliban spring offensive? I don't know. I do know that in our mind, there was a very proactive spring offensive on behalf of our forces and our coalition partners there. So in a sense, we took it to them rather than wait to see what they were going to do.

In some ways, I think this may be taking them by surprise and this will drift into the center of gravity. Afghanistan is the center of gravity for bad folks. It was an ungoverned space. It presented -- if you would let me use a laboratory analogy in my mind, it presented the petri dish or the culture for a parasite known as al Qaeda to grow.

So when we in the fall of 2001 went there, it was very deliberate. I was part of that, very proudly, looking back at the fall of 2001 when I was more of a tactical military

person than I am now as a staff guy in this job. We went there, and when I arrived there I saw a repressed people that had been just downtrodden by the Taliban. And the Taliban were basically, in my mind, somewhat puppets of al Qaeda and it was a very -- it was an arrangement of thugs that I had not seen.

So when we went there, we went to their center of gravity. I think the thought was that we would leave; that in our way of doing things, that we would go in there, we would create a situation of whatever it is we do, and then we would grow tired and leave.

The point is, we did not leave. The point is that the international community came. The international community by its presence is saying, we believe in Afghanistan, we support Afghanistan, and we don't support thugs who then take advantage of ungoverned spaces, because ultimately it challenges the security framework of the world.

And for that reason, we see what some were calling a resurgence of the Taliban -- no, I don't think it's a resurgence; I think they were there all along, they've lived there all along. Those hills are their fortress. When they saw us come in, they went to the hills. They stayed there thinking we were going to leave. We didn't leave, so they then saw us now remaining in their center of gravity, particularly, then, in the south. Kandahar was their -- you know, their spiritual center of excellence, and that's where we saw the places like Tarnak Farms grow up around the mullah, and we saw -- because they could get their spiritual leadership there; they could also do their terrorist training right there all in the same region. So that's a hotbed for them. It is their center of gravity, and we continue to sit there, and that's going to I think now bring them to fight. So I never really viewed this as a resurgence as much as I viewed it as this was sort of as long as we stayed, we'd be in the plan all along.

Q Okay, thank you.

MR. HOLT: And let's see, Mike Goldfarb.

Q Yes. The AP reported yesterday that the Air Force is dropping bombs at twice the rate they were last year at this time, which I actually found surprising, given what we thought was going to be a decreased reliance on airpower. The AP seemed to imply that that might be just because there are more aircraft on station there or it just might be some kind of coincidence. Can you speak at all to --

GEN. HOLMES: Yeah, I read that article this morning. That was no real surprise as you really track the numbers. I think what we see is, as we continue the presence of our force there and working with the Iraqis and the need for very precise fire and effects on the adversary, particularly when it comes to troops in contact, that, you know, this becomes the -- a weapon of choice. And airpower is a very good way to deliver that, and we've got the means and capability, and I think it's -- that we're using it.

So I think if you look at the increase connected with the levels of violence and the effectiveness of the coalition force partnered with the Iraqi security force that this is just a



means of doing what needs to be done to continue to go after the anti-coalition militias and their forces and the terrorist elements there.

It's not just one adversary in Iraq, and I'm sure you're aware of that.

Q So this is just sort of an organic development. This not a strategy that's come down from above or the fact that there's an extra carrier there or --

GEN. HOLMES: No.

Q Okay.

GEN. HOLMES: It's a means of providing fires and effects to forces who are engaged with the enemy. So no -- there was no deliberate plan, if you will, in my mind, in case -- you know, maybe there's somebody out there who had it in their mind but not in mine that this was a deliberate -- we will double the -- you know, our bombings.

Q Thank you, General.

GEN. HOLMES: Yeah.

MR. HOLT: Okay. Jarred Fishman (sp).

Jarred, you with us? (No audible response.)

Okay. Graham.

Q Good morning, General. This is Graham of Blackfive (sp). I wanted to ask you a question about one of your pillars that you had mentioned at the beginning of the call, the one about strengthening relationships with states and organizations in the region that contribute to stability and commerce. Admiral Fallon was very effective of that kind of military-to-military and military-to-state diplomacy when he was at PACOM. I wonder if you could tell us a bit about what he's doing not in Iraq and Afghanistan, but with other states in the region in that regard.

GEN. HOLMES: Certainly. One, I think most immediately here in these first 90 days he's engaging the military and the leaders in the more moderate states and clearly with the aim of, you know, increasing the prospects for long-term stability. That's his message. Long-term security. And he works to strengthen those relationships.

I think if you look at primary focus with the GCC to try and influence the states and organizations like that, to work and contribute to regional stability, reaching out -- as even General Abizaid had relied so much on -- reaching out to the moderate states and their militaries and creating that dialogue with their leadership. So I move along that same lines. Renewed or continued interest in our theater security cooperation strategy.

I'm trying to think if there are other visits. I think the key is very vocal support and advocacy that we're committed as a partner in the region, and clearly -- and I say this -- it's not to put a stamp of Made in the USA on the region. Or, do it like we do it in the U.S. military with your militaries.

I think the good news, at least from my perspective, is that we're past that and now sending a message of partnering with very, very important allies, particularly against these violent and extreme enemies, and that understanding, it's not just a U.S.-only show, when it comes to diplomacy or when it comes to a military engagement.

So I think the encouraging thing we see is dialogue, with the U.S. being a partner in that dialogue, for regional actors to bring their powers to bear in the region, and not expecting -- and as we look at the military, we send a message to say, how can we partner with your capabilities, with some large states, some small states? They all are a member of the team, and what they bring to the fight is very important. And I think we've seen that here recently with some countries in the -- down around the Horn of Africa, just like that, as they are engaged with routing out terrorists, finding them and, you know, killing or capturing these folks.

Q Can you talk -- just maybe give us a few examples of some sort of sub-state-level or non-government organizations in the CENTCOM region that CENTCOM thinks are important and wants to reach out towards?

GEN. HOLMES: Well, you know, if I -- I think the area that we're talking about is the Horn of Africa. And I think it's very important that we engage there. And the foot in the door there, honestly, is humanitarian operations.

I think we cannot understate the importance of the immediate needs of people. When they are without governments, they still need those certain basics of life that we've got to provide. So -- and we have -- (inaudible) -- Horn of Africa, the joint task force, HOA, 1,300 U.S. personnel. That works closely with the embassies in the Horn of Africa region to focus humanitarian mission. Ultimately that is what I would call a softer instrument of military power, which then over time builds capacity with regard to combating terrorism and other challenges.

So that is very clearly a focus, and it's a very effective use of the full range of military capacity. And I think, as we look at the region, you will see Central Command saying, look, use all of my instruments of power; don't just look at me for my kinetics. And I couldn't underscore that enough.

Now when it comes to combating terrorism, you know, we've fully said that it's the intent that we're going to go find and fix ourselves on bad actors, terrorists.

And if we can work with a regional partner, we desire to do that because it's very important as we look at these countries, or even these ungoverned spaces, that we support and partner so that they take the lead in killing or capturing some of these individuals that

are on our international lists as HVIs, or high valued individuals. So just to continue down that, we look at -- I can't underscore the importance in my mind of that area in the Horn of Africa.

Q Thank you very much.

MR. HOLT: Okay, any follow-up questions?

Q Yes, I have one. General, Andrew Lubin again from ON Point. In the scheme of your entire CENTCOM region, what do you see or where do you see as the center of gravity as the most important part of defeating the terrorists? Would it be more Afghanistan or more Iraq?

GEN. HOLMES: I'm going to step back and actually give you -- I think it's in the moderate voices throughout the region. It's not either/or Iraq or Afghanistan. And ultimately it is the moderate voice of the people of the region. And we've got to focus on that, because let's say that we put all of our eggs in the Iraq basket, let's say that we -- you know, whatever -- and I'm not here to say what the conditions for victory or success are in Iraq. Let's say that at some point in time we win there. But if we win there without, in my mind, partnering with the region, then we've been shortsighted. So you can't -- now, don't underestimate -- or don't read into what I'm saying to say that it's not important to win, it's very important --

Q No, you didn't say that. I understand.

GEN. HOLMES: -- that we succeed. But I would not want to put one over the other. They're both very important for this reason; we went there, we are committed, and we've got to stay there to show that commitment not to -- in addition to each of those individual countries, Iraq and Afghanistan, but we also have to show that commitment to the region. Because I'll be very honest with you, I'm not so naive as to think that there are(n't) many eyes watching from our Middle -- our partners in the Middle East in the CENTCOM region that are saying: What will the U.S. do? What will the military do? If they leave and depart Iraq, does that mean they're leaving the region?

Q Well, on that -- okay, on that --

GEN. HOLMES: And that's hugely important.

Q Oh, I understand completely. On that note, then, a follow-on question or follow-on region, what are we doing in Pakistan and also Darfur to engage the moderate - or people who would like to be moderate, assuming that they don't starve to death, to kind of project force in the entire region?

GEN. HOLMES: Right. Well, you know, I go back to looking at the importance of the partners, the importance of sending the message that we're not here to do it for you, we're here to assist and partner.

You know, all too -- when I was a kid in high school, I read "The Ugly American," and it stuck with me all these years, in that people have -- we have to look at what we do and what we say, and they have to be in sync with each other. And for years, maybe we haven't done that very well. So now more importantly than ever before, we communicate our priorities as Admiral Fallon has laid them out, and we stick by that; that we're there to strengthen our relationship, we're there to strengthen our partnership.

Q What are we doing, then, in Darfur, in Pakistan? It seems to me we're either doing nothing or picking the wrong side.

GEN. HOLMES: Well, now you would get me into that policy debate that I've got to stay away from.

Q Okay.

GEN. HOLMES: Now, what I can tell you from the military side, that we engage with the Pak military daily. We look at that border region because strategically I think we all know how important it is and how significant it is to our adversary, so that we work there.

Now, you get up to a point where for me again I go back to I understand my lane as a military officer; that, you know, I can't get into the policy debate of "if this, then that." And in some ways, the same with Darfur. In some ways, if you choose to use the military instrument of power there for humanitarian, then that's a thing that the military, the uniformed service can do for you, but we've got to let the policymakers sort out ultimately how we deal with that. And I, of course, defer -- you know, I go back to "Military 101," where I know that -- and it's a value of this military that we work for our civilian leadership and we follow the lead of our policymakers, and that's why we are the world's greatest military, is because we understand that.

So in those questions there is a point into which I am observer and I've got to wait and see where -- (inaudible) -- international policymakers take us. Are there things that we could do? You betcha.

Q Okay. You know, you had a situation a couple months ago in Bernal (ph) where the Pak mil was firing on the Marines, who were responding accordingly. That's the type of thing that hasn't really made the news, but that's pretty horrendous for American-Pakistani relations.

GEN. HOLMES Yes, if you've ever been to that -- and you may have been to that area of the world.

Q I was, yes.

GEN. HOLMES: As you know -- I'm not sure where the border is.

Q They knew. (Chuckles.) (Inaudible) -- they knew. And they were firing on the Marines, who were responding accordingly because they didn't want to be fired on, Pak mil or not.

And that's what makes me wonder sometimes how we're engaging in --

GEN. HOLMES: And if you'll notice, several weeks ago, unfortunately, we sent - - proactively sent a team forward to meet with the Pak mil and the border guards, and ultimately there were some bad actors watching that and they killed one of our soldiers that was engaged in talks, actively engaged in trying to come to greater clarity as to how we work together on the border.

So ultimately -- (off mike) -- problem there. But I go back to -- (off mike) -- that I'll be honest with you -- (off mike) -- a lot of those hills and rocks and the little dirt trails, and sorting things out without the means of blue force tracking and other things to sort out who's friend or foe, and then also, if you've been to that region, folks can change clothing very quickly, and what appears to be a good guy one minute is a bad guy the next. So my answer to that question is, is, you know, it is a tough situation.

You know, I can remember in Afghanistan where folks would ride up to you on a bicycle or a horse with an AK-47 strapped over their shoulder, and it's a way of life. So intent and action often transmits to you who the enemy is, not the appearance of a uniform or a line on a map. So the adversary comes at you in this region very quickly, and often who appears to be your friend may not be your friend. So there are a lot of challenges there, and I wouldn't want to diminish the day in and day out effort of both the Pak military or our coalition military in trying to partner to solve that region.

What I'd have to look at at Pakistan is that over time, they have been very active and, I think, if I recall, our most successful coalition partner in seeking out terrorists and either capturing them or killing them. And that can't go unnoticed.

So despite the folks who would look at, say, a political struggle, if I look at actions on the behalf of that partner, they're committed, they're there, and they've done a significant amount of work in the war on terror. And if my memory is right, I think -- at least I know at one time they were at the top of the leader board when it came to routing (the terrorists ?) out and bringing them either to justice or to an end.

Q Okay. Well, with them having withdrawn from the Waziristan region, doesn't that affect you directly in Afghanistan?

GEN. HOLMES: Everything has an impact there. But it's, here again, something that day in and day out we must work through.

Q Okay, thank you.

MR. HOLT: Okay, General, thank you very much for joining us today. It's been  
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GEN. HOLMES: I may want to do this again sometime. This is a good crowd!

MR. HOLT: Well, thank you, sir.

Q We're hoping. Thank you very much.

MR. HOLT: And we hope we can do this again. And we appreciate you being with us very much. Thank you, sir.

GEN. HOLMES: I, again, just in closing, I want to say I appreciate what you do, particularly when it comes to the support of our great troops in uniform. They're doing so many great things, and it's folks like you that continue to support the troop. And ultimately, for a senior in uniform, for me, it comes down to what those great young Americans are doing.

MR. HOLT: Well, thank you, sir, very much, and we look forward to speaking with you again.

GEN. HOLMES: Okay. Thank you.

MR. HOLT: Thank you, General. Appreciate it.

GEN. HOLMES: Thanks.

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®FC- END

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